

Town of Hudson  
Benson Park Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 20, 2011

**1. Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Benson Committee was called to order by Chair Harry Schibanoff at 7:04 p.m. on January 20, 2011 in the Board of Selectmen Meeting Room at the Town Hall with the Pledge of Allegiance lead by A. Desrosiers.

**2. Attendance:**

Vice Chair J. Barnes, A. Desrosiers, R. Empey, C. Gagnon, J. Leone (late), P. Nichols, Natalie Undercofler, Alternates :Ralph Alio and Dave Briand  
Excused: Selectman Liaison S. Jasper,

**3. Public Input**

None

**4. Presentations**

**A. Playground Proposal**

**Eric Horton and R. Cote**, Representatives of the Recreation Department, came before the Committee to present a proposal to erect a playground at Benson Park. Copies of this proposal were handed out to the Committee. E. Horton said that the Recreation Committee formed a sub-committee to study plans to put an all-accessible (ADA) playground at the Park. They decided on a Boundless Playground. This would enable children that are wheel chair bound, on crutches, any kind of leg or arm brace or other physical disability usage of this playground along with other children. This Recreation Sub-Committee met at Benson Park on numerous occasions to study sites that would be acceptable to building this playground. The sub-committee found three (3) sites that they considered. Some of the criteria for choosing these sites is proximity to parking (both regular and Handicap), Landscape work required, Inclusion of children in park activities, Handicap accessibility, Shade, Ease of access to restrooms, Impact to reclaimed areas. Sites A, B, and C were presented to the Committee. The Recreation Sub-Committee recommended site B as the area most compatible with the criteria above. An architectural design was shown to the Committee to give an idea of what the playground would look like. This design was not in the area chosen. Elevation was a big consideration in their choice with ramps and platforms. This gives handicap children a view that they do not get when it is at ground level. The Recreation Sub-Committee would like to make this a Lion themed playground because of the past Historical nature of the park. The playground would be built around a large tree that is in the area and would offer shade in the hot summer months. Vice Chair J. Barnes asked if the Recreation Sub-Committee considered cost a factor in choosing site B. E. Horton stated that if you don't have to build an elevation to construct the playground it would not raise the cost. Site B is already elevated. Chair H. Schibanoff asked what the time-table would be on this project. E. Horton said he would like to see approval from this Committee so that they could go forth with asking for bids, get approval from the BOS and approval from the Planning Board for release of funds and start things in motion in the spring. Chair H, Schibanoff said that this Committee is just an advisory committee and could not approve the plan, we could recommend it to the BOS, C. Gagnon asked what kind of Tree was in this area and was told that it was a large Maple Tree that used to have barbed wire around it. Vice Chair J. Barnes asked who would be responsible for maintenance of the playground and was told that the Recreation Department would see to this.

He also asked if going to the planning board for funds, would this come from the Recreation Department. E. Horton said would this come out of the Recreation Department Impact Fees D. Empey asked about the elevation and if handicap children were to use the slides, etc. how would they get back to the upper level. E. Horton said that the playground would be octagon shaped and the pods would have activities that these children could interact with. He also said the plans could include a small stair case with hand rails that children, with lesser disabilities, could use the slides, etc. and then return to the elevated portion. D. Empey stated that he has done some research and there are less than 1% of the children in Town through grade 5 that have a handicap. With this said he thought that two (2) handicap parking spots be assigned in the Main Parking Lot for this playground. D. Empey would also like to see a complete plan when available. P. Nichols said that she thought that putting handicap parking in the lower parking lot should be a job for the Benson Committee not the Recreation Department. D. Empey was just bringing to light the difficulty of the steep grade returning to the Handicap Parking.

**P. Nichols made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectman site B as a Playground project to be erected by the Recreation Department for all children  
A. Desrosiers seconded the motion**

J. Leone asked what would the time line be in construction this playground. R. Cote said that all they wanted for now was the approval to go ahead with the project. He does not see anything happening in the park until spring. E. Horton said he would like to say this year but cannot give a definitive time line. They are also looking at a 'not to exceed' value among other things. A plan that the Recreation Department would be looking for is a 'Community Build' day. This would involve all the structural parts of the playground, along with an engineer to guide the volunteers. This usually takes a week-end to complete and would save money. C. Gagnon asked if this Committee would see a finished plan before it was started and R. Cote said that the people putting this together would be professionals. Chair H. Schibanoff said that the idea of using volunteers good because the park has a list of at least 300 volunteers. P. Nichols thanked E. Horton and R. Cote for a very professional presentation.

**All in favor...Motion Carries**

## **5. Approval of Minutes**

A. Minutes of January 6, 2011

**N. Undercofler made a motion to accept minutes of January 6, 2011**

**C. Gagnon seconded the motion**

**All in favor...Motion Carries**

## **6. Old Business**

### **A. Vision Statement**

Chair H Schibanoff sent copies of updated versions of the Mission and Vision Statement done by A. Desrosiers and Ralph Alio. These were based on the first draft presented at our last meeting. He also thanked Ann and Ralph for putting forth the effort sending in their versions. P. Nichols said that she liked both and was hard pressed to choose one. She said that R. Alio covered everything A. Desrosiers said in a shorter version. When asked if he would like to read it he deferred to P. Nichols.

### **R. Alio' Submission**

To protect and maintain the rich history of the park, Preserve and enhance a park which enriches the quality of life for the residents of Hudson and visitors alike, preserves it for the enjoyment of present and future generations, fosters harmony with nature by promoting a wide range of year round passive recreational activities.

**Chair H. Schibanoff** asked if this was a Mission Statement or a Vision Statement. R. Alio said it was a combination of both.

**A. Desrosiers Submission**

**Mission Statement**

The Benson Park Committee will provide year round opportunities for our Community members and visitors to enjoy passive recreation activities using existing resources within the park.

**Vision Statement**

To foster community pride and volunteerism in achieving our goals.

To plan for educational opportunities on the park's historical and environmental components.

To restore and preserve historical buildings and structures.

To preserve and protect our wildlife's natural habitats.

To strategically prepare for future needs and projects.

**Chair H. Schibanoff** stated that the trend in Mission Statements now is to keep it short. N. Undercofler said that she thought that in R. Alio's statement it should read Benson Park. Chair H. Schibanoff said that Benson Park does not have a history yet. P. Nichols said that it was a Benson Park Mission Statement and she thought you would not need to put Benson Park inside the statement. C. Gagnon said that the organization name is in the body of the statement. J. Leone said it seems that R. Alio's statement was written for the park and A. Desrosiers was written for the Committee. The question he has is if for the Committee or the Park or do we need two statements. This was a good point, because Chair H. Schibanoff said that when doing the budget it is broken into two pieces...the Committee and the Park. Vice Chair J. Barnes said that when playing with words if we precede what R. Alio has drafted by saying that the Benson Park Committee, etc. Vice Chair J. Barnes thought it should be looked at again and bring it back at a later date. This has been tabled.

**7. New Business**

**A. Committee Reports**

**P. Nichols** sent an article to the Hudson/Litchfield News welcoming the new members of the Committee.

**B. N. Undercofler** said that the Street Naming Sub-Committee has not met yet but her son has found old maps. He will find one that will show all streets and paths and he will increase its size. This map will allow for the street names and adopt-a-spot areas to be shown.

**J. Leone** mentioned the Bench Selection Sub-Committee. Nothing has been done at this time and 2/3 of this group is gone. R. Alio said he would join and Chair H. Schibanoff said he would help when he could. J. Leone accepted this. P. Nichols and A. Desrosiers will still be bench testers. Chair H. Schibanoff said that a decision should be made before spring. Friends of Benson Park are waiting to order.

**C. 2012 Budget & Financial Report**

Chair H. Schibanoff sent the Budget Report and the Report that D. Yates keeps on our spending to the Committee for review. D. Empey had a few questions that he felt J. Leone could answer. He asked about the purchase of cement, nails, and wood. J. Leone said that this was for the Gorilla House and was approved. Chair H. Schibanoff asked if the money approved to finish the Gorilla House was included in this accounting. It should not be coming from this account along with Dave's Septic. This is not being held against us so we can take it out. J. Barnes asked about the Benson Park Funds and D & E would be available to the Committee if needed in the spring. Chair H. Schibanoff said that this was right. P. Nichols asked about the money in the Budget for Newspaper Ads. It was never used for 2010 so it has been moved for 2011. Chair H. Schibanoff said that he would not be presenting the Financial Report on a monthly basis because not much will be happening until spring. He said he would bring this to the Committee on a Quarterly basis.

**D. Selectmen Actions**

Chair H. Schibanoff said that the Selectmen approved one thing and that was the disposition of our artifacts. They decided to give them as a gift to the Governor. He also received a Memo from the D.O.T. in Concord saying that the plans to construct a Senior Citizens' center in the former parking lot of a property known as Benson Park is outside and visually separated from the currently defined historic area the construction of a Senior Center will not affect historical or archaeological resources.

## **8. Other Business/Remarks by Committee Members**

### **A. Potential Scout Projects in Benson Park**

Chair H. Schibanoff said that he forgot to add this to the agenda and wanted to know if anyone had looked at this. Vice Chair J. Barnes said he looked at it a little. He was taking things out mostly. Chair H. Schibanoff wanted to add the making of descriptive and permanent signage for the historical buildings. The signage that is in the park now is not long lasting. D. Empey wants to take out the repair and rebuilding of the windows in the cupola of the Elephant Barn as this will require a professional. He also wants to add the construction of wild life blinds. P. Nichols said it was already included in the original projects. P. Nichols said that there were two other bridges near the Old Shoe that needed to be refurbished or restored. D. Empey said this would be a viable project. N. Undercofler asked if 'Identify and label locations within the old animal park' and 'Establish a GPS map with significant sites within the park' could be combined. D. Empey said that a new GPS map has been done within the past few weeks. It is not ready for presentation at this time. He stated that this could be a very complicated map and it is his opinion that the GPS map be removed. Chair H. Schibanoff asked about adding Street Signs to the list but there should be some consistency throughout the park regarding signage. J. Leone said that adding this to the listing would not hurt and it would not have to be awarded to anyone until we were ready. D. Empey wanted to put a hold on this until more discussion was held. He felt that these signs should be done by a professional. Chair H. Schibanoff said that you add it to the list but change the type to white. It will be on the list but won't be seen until you are ready. C. Gagnon wanted to remove Eagle Scout or Scout from the project heading. She felt that others might be interested in a project but might be hesitant seeing Scout on the heading. A. Desrosiers wanted to know where the creek was along the sewer easement. D. Empey said it was a section of Merrill Brook heading toward Central Street. C. Gagnon said it had been discussed before but maybe we could add this to the project list: a line of evergreens to shelter the path from Central Street. D. Empey said that this would be an excellent project. Chair H. Schibanoff said that he thought some planting should be done in front of the fence along the new path. We could not interfere with the swale but a few greens could beautify this area. Chair H. Schibanoff will make changes to the list and email it out for review. P. Nichols made another suggestion to remove 'Organize a clean-up including its management, determination of areas to be worked on'. All agreed to remove this. J. Leone mentioned that 'Build and install park benches and picnic tables' should be changes to just picnic tables at this time.

### **B. Remarks by Committee Members**

**A. Desrosiers** has been into the park and met Crista. She has taken up snow shoeing and is looking forward to more snow so that she can do it again.

**C. Gagnon** said she had met Ann in the park and went back the next day. She could not get over the amount of foot traffic from one day to the next. The Park is really being used more than most expected. There are people still walking dogs, snow shoeing, cross country skiing. Everyone is having a great time.

**D. Empey** said that the usage in the park is amazing. The amount of snow is high but it is not deterring people from coming into the park to enjoy the day. On a negative note D. Empey stated we have an issue with signs. Within the last week or so we have had signs stolen or vandalized. We have three (3) signs that have been unscrewed and the sign taken, and two (2) more signs that have been smashed. These are trail signs. D. Empey has been in contact with

the Police Department and has filed a police report. The Police Department will do whatever they can do. D. Empey will do his best to replace the missing signs

**J. Leone** said he was asked by a visitor to the park if Benson Boulevard could be plowed to allow for walking. D. Briand said that this could not be done because of the RAP used on these paths would be torn up and be everywhere. If the road was paved it would be no problem.

**P. Nichols** wanted to say thank you to Lisa Nute from the IT Dept. at Town Hall. L. Nute took eight months of minutes and posted them on the Town website and never complained. She said that everyone working at Town Hall is special.

**Chair H. Schibanoff** said that L. Nute complimented P. Nichols on her minutes which was nice of her to do. It was appreciated.

**Next Meeting:**

**February 3, 2011**

**7:00 PM**

**Community Development Room, Town Hall**

**9. Adjournment: 8:19 PM**

**C. Gagnon made a motion to adjourn**

**N. Undercofler seconded the motion**

**All in favor-Motion Carries**